

Merten file
Y-595
8 November 1960MEMORANDUM

TO: Embassy Political Section

FROM: []

SUBJECT: EDA Background Information on the Merten Case

REFERENCE: Y-573, 12 October 1960

The following information stems from a meeting on 20 October 1960 of officials of the Communist-front United Democratic Left (EDA) in Athens. Dimitrios Dimitriou, senior EDA functionary, was the principal speaker. [] cannot judge the accuracy of the information but is disseminating it because EDA's future exploitation of the Merten affair will probably be based on these allegations.

1. When Max Merten returned to Greece, he was positive that he would not be prosecuted by the Greek authorities. His arrest is attributed to a chance happening: Andreas Tousis, Assistant District Attorney charged with prosecuting war criminals, was unaware that the Greek government did not desire to prosecute Merten. Convinced that any pending accusation would be settled perfunctorily, Merten willingly appeared before Tousis. After Tousis ordered Merten's arrest and detainment, the government quietly assured Merten that his imprisonment would be of short duration.

2. After Merten's arrest, Amalia Vazaka, who worked for the German services in Thessaloniki during the German occupation, was examined as a witness by Dionysios Theotikos, special investigator of collaborators. Vazaka, now the wife of (fnu) Stasinopoulos, a former military justice officer, stated that she had met Merten through Aikaterini Meizner, Greek spouse of one of Merten's German subordinates. Vazaka, in turn, introduced Merten at her house to Doxoula Leontidou, now the wife of Interior Minister Dimitrios Makris.

3. Vazaka's statement was given to a pro-EDA lawyer by Dina Papatheodorou, a secretary of the War Criminal Prosecution Office and daughter of the administrative head of the Court of First Instance of Athens. (When Tousis traveled to West Germany to cooperate with the German authorities in the prosecution of German war criminals, Papatheodorou accompanied him.) When Merten was tried, Vazaka's written deposition was not read during the hearing before the Military Court of Athens but was deleted by an unknown person. This deletion was probably ordered by the government so that Merten's association with Doxoula Leontidou would not be disclosed in open court.

4. EDA intends to use the Merten case as a means of toppling the present government, and hopes to replace it with a regime that will accept a Balkan

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agreement and the establishment of a Balkan denuclearized zone. To collect and examine pertinent material against the government in the Merten affair, EDA has set up a special committee that includes Antonios Brillakis, Vasileios Efraimidis, Ilias Iliou, and Konstantinos Priftis. Some of the information has been sent to the Hamburger Echo and the German magazine Der Spiegel; other material is being retained for use at an appropriate time.

5. To support its case, EDA has already gathered the following "facts":

a. Spyridon Rakanatis, a Jewish convict, who is serving a life sentence in Averof prison for collaboration with the Gestapo, was brought before District Attorney Tsantilas and told that he would be pardoned if he agreed to contradict Merten's accusations. When the prisoner refused to cooperate, he was placed in solitary confinement, his house searched for documents from the occupation period, and his wife subjected to an exhaustive interrogation.

b. Former police chief Angelos Evert has a list of collaborators, and has promised a pro-Communist individual that he is willing to turn over photostats of these documents. EDA is "making strong efforts to acquire" this material. EDA has verified that C. M. Woodhouse, former head of the British Military Mission in Greece, has been in Athens for several days and "has made many contacts with Evert" in connection with the Merten affair. "It is apparent from this fact" that the British are taking an active role in this matter.

c. On 10 or 11 October, a German representative of the Hamburger Echo arrived in Athens. He made contact with Ilias Tsirimokos, Koninos Pyromaglou, and Ilias Iliou on 13 and 14 October at the office of the Democratic Union, and left for Germany on 15 October. The purpose of his trip was to gather and exchange facts from both sides against the Karamanlis government.

d. German Social-Democratic official Gustav Heinemann, one of Merten's lawyers, is in contact with the Democratic Union (DE) and EDA through Achilleus Grigorogiannis, a lawyer with social-democratic leanings whose wife is from a wealthy Hamburg family.

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